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Role and responsibilities of partnerships in building and reinvigorating natural resource organizations

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The Role and Responsibilities of Partnerships in Building and Reinvigorating Natural Resource Organizations

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The future of fisheries and wildlife programs depends on meaningful and productive interactions between and among many disciplines and organizations. As these programs are truly trans-disciplinary, a key role of the unit administrator is to foster and nurture the development of the unit as an organization, particularly in its relationships with external constituents. This paper discusses the processes, challenges and opportunities of partnerships in relationship-building, and the changes in responsibilities that this type of venture places on all parties and their unit administrators. These challenges apply equally to the teaching, research, outreach and service missions of the academic unit. Over the past decade we have developed a unique and highly effective partnership with our state, federal and international partners, incorporating the teaching/learning process within the management and academic units and their related outreach missions. This partnership, the Partnership for Ecosystem Research and Management (PERM), has helped to better connect our programs to the needs of students, other campus units and external management/research/policy organizations in a highly interactive and meaningful relationship. Participating in this partnership to carry out the units' core missions has forged an inter-dependent network in which each partner relies on the others for a variety of support functions, including funding, personnel, focus and direction. As the connectivity and strength of the relationship grows, changes in any one compartment inherently impact the other compartments in the network. Thus for partnerships to remain healthy and vibrant, unit administrators must rely on trust, frequent communication and a willingness to collaborate in good times as well as bad.

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